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ENG 4905-001: African American Youth Literature

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Office Hours: MWR 9:00 – 10:30
& by appointment

ENG 4905: Studies in Youth Literature (3-0-3) *Writing Intensive*
Studies in-depth of some aspect of children's literature. Topics to be announced.

Our Topic: African American Youth Literature

MWF 11:00 – 11:50 in CH 3691

Textbook

2007 *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African American Children's Literature* by Rudine Sims Bishop

Anthology

1996 *The Best of The Brownies' Book*,* edited by Dianne Johnson-Feelings

Picture Books (in chronological order)

1962 *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats (author and illustrator)

1991 *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringold (author and illustrator)

Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman; Illus. Caroline Binch

1997 *Nappy Hair* by Carolivia Herron; illus. Joe Cepeda

2010 *My People* by Langston Hughes; illus. Charles R. Smith, Jr.

Novels + Non-Fiction + Memoir (in chronological order)

1930 *The Secret of the Old Clock* by "Carolyn Keene"

[1967 *Zeely* by Virginia Hamilton]

1968 *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* by Kristin Hunter (Lattany)

[1976 *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* by Mildred Taylor]

1995 *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* by Jacqueline Woodson

1999 *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

[2001 *Bad Boy* (memoir) by Walter Dean Myers]

2004 *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (non-fiction) by Toni Morrison

2009 *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice* by Philip Hoose

2010 *One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia

2010 *Yummy* by G. Negri; illus. by Randy DuBurke

+ Self-Selected Books

Course Goals

- to improve our ability to evaluate works of African American youth literature
- to improve our ability to talk and think productively about race, including whiteness
- to read enough works of 20th & 21st century African American youth literature to provide us with a basis for identifying trends, traditions and innovations
- to identify issues that recur in discussions of African American youth literature, and to articulate and consider our own positions on these issues in relation to that discussion
- to appreciate the craftsmanship and creativity that contribute to the literary and artistic quality of individual works of African American youth literature
- to identify the thematic concerns explored in African American youth literature and compare the treatment of similar themes in works by various writers and illustrators
- to become better informed about the literary-historical contexts in which African American youth literature was produced, and to use that information to analyze the choices made by writers and artists working within these complex rhetorical situations
- to compare the purposes and goals of the producers of African American youth literature, the varied audiences their books are designed to address, and the strategies used by authors, Illustrators and publishers to impact their audiences and achieve their goals
- to consider how class, gender, sexuality, region, religion, and other aspects of intersectional identity or environment complicate what it means to be "African American," the extent to which that complexity is reflected in texts, and how that complexity plays out given the the multiple or intersectional identities of characters, authors, artists, publishers, critics, librarians, educators, scholars and readers
- To find ways to make use of information and ideas developed in the course of this class to contribute to our growth as students, professionals (e.g. educators), and citizens
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Major ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion Posts (up to 300 points) ~ Three times this semester you will receive a score for analytic and reflective responses based on these criteria:

- attention to textual, narrative and visual details in analysis of literary works
- development of ideas-in-progress, spelled out as fully & precisely as possible
- use of terms and concepts introduced in lectures, class discussion, and readings
- recursiveness (“second thoughts”): re-consideration and refinement of ideas over the course of the semester, exploration of inter-textual and other *connections*
- completeness **late* posts will be penalized substantially. Deductions for *missing* posts have an even more devastating effect on your score, so “better late than never”

Book Talks (up to 75 points) ~ A focused (7 minute) analysis + demonstration of key features of your book that highlights its contributions to African American youth lit and our discussion of it.

Review Essay (up to 300 points) ~ In a formal essay (approx. 4 - 5 pages in APA or MLA-style), you will describe, analyze, and evaluate a self-selected work of African American Youth Literature, offering your readers information, insights and examples that will help them understand where it comes from and what it has to offer us as scholars, readers, educators. **This essay can be revised and re-submitted 1 week after it is returned to you with a grade.*

Participation (up to 100 points) ~ This is a collaborative learning experience, so participation is key to our success. To maximize your participation score—and learning—you need to show up consistently. Beyond that, you should prepare for class by doing assigned reading in an active, engaged way. Take notes; write out questions and observations; mark key passages with sticky notes. Treat discussion posts as an opportunity to articulate, develop and clarify your ideas. *That will prepare you to participate productively.* Then you will be ready to **share** ideas, information and questions in group work and in class discussion, and **respond** thoughtfully, critically and respectfully to other people’s comments and questions.

Final Exam Essay (150 points) ~ An in-class essay in which you analyze three works read during the semester (at least one since mid-term), focusing on each work’s development of a shared theme, the way each author/illustrator uses a similar technique or strategy, the way each work illuminates a recurring issue, or in light of another shared characteristic or concern. Open Book. Two-sided page of notes or outline allowed. Bring Works Cited page.

GRADES

Course grades will be based on the percentage you earn of the 1000 points available.

Note: I may adjust these point values if we add, cancel, or revise any assignments.

D2L Posts + informal writing assignments (100+100+100)	= 300
Book Talk(s) (75+75)	= 150
*Review Essay	= 300
Participation + Attendance	= 100
*Final Exam Essay	= 150

**Graduate Students will complete a 10-12 page research paper in lieu of the review essay + final exam. The audience, purpose, and genre of this paper will be negotiated individually.*

The bottom line: 91% & up = A 81 - 90% = B 71 - 80% = C 61 - 70% = D

Responsibilities & Policies

- 1.) Keep in touch! Late work will be penalized unless we come to an understanding *before* the due date. If you are experiencing temporary difficulties, contact me as soon as possible. *No late work or revisions will be accepted the last week of classes.*
- 2.) Attendance counts. If you have three (3) or more *un*-excused absences, you will lose at least 50 of the points available at the end of the semester for “participation.”
- 3.) Use MLA or APA style documentation for the Works Cited page (MLA) or References page (APA) and the parenthetical citations that refer readers to this list of sources. Use the *latest MLA Handbook* (7th edition) or *APA Publication Manual* (6th edition) or a reliable print or electronic guide with up-to-date information and examples.
- 4.) Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s phrasing, ideas or visuals and using them in your own oral, written or visual work without identifying and giving credit to their source. This is a serious academic offense, and could result in a failing grade for the plagiarized assignment or this course, and might also incur other university penalties. At the very least, any work with problematic citations will have to be revised before it can receive a grade. Consultants in the Writing Center will be happy to work with you or answer questions about how to quote, paraphrase, summarize—and cite—your sources.
- 5.) You must complete all major assignments to pass this course.

Information & Resources

Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide me with one of the yellow “Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach” forms available in a rack outside the office of Dr. Melissa Ames (CH 3821).

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct. Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Students with disabilities in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class should contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the **Student Success Center** for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. For an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Drop in (CH3110) or call (581-5929) the **EIU Writing Center** to make an appointment at any point in the writing process, from brainstorming, planning and drafting to editing. Our hours are Monday through Thursday 9 am – 3 & 6 – 9 pm, and from 9 am – 1 pm on Fridays.

Assessment: Final Exam + 3rd D2L Posts + 2nd Participation Score

Tentative Schedule of Readings & Major Assignments

UNIT 1 21st century Award-Winning African American Youth Literature

Week 1

- M Introductions, Definitions, and Conversation
- W Begin *One Crazy Summer*; Annotate “Where are the Children of Color in Children’s Books?” or “The Apartheid of Children’s Literature” (handouts); Grad. Students read both plus “Diversity is not Enough” or “Still an All-White World?” or any other voice in the current conversation
- F Continue *One Crazy Summer*; Read “Introduction” in *Free within Ourselves* (hereafter *Free*), pp. xi-xv + “Some Concluding Thoughts,” pp. 273-274. First D2L Post

Week 2

- [M] Labor Day ~ No classes
- W Finish *One Crazy Summer*. Read *My People*.
- F Annotate Reviews of *One Crazy Summer* or *My People*. Read *Hornbook* articles on Rita Williams-Garcia or Charles R. Smith, Jr.; Peruse “Reading Lessons: Graphic Novel 101” (handout); Bring *Yummy*

Week 3

- M Read *Yummy*
- W Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center in Booth Library to select two 21st century award winning works of AAYL: one picture book + one longer work of fiction (contemporary or historical); Prepare by reading Coretta Scott King Award criteria + perusing list of winners and honors
- F Read and respond to Self-Selected Picture Book

Week 4 ~ *individual conference appointments available MTW to discuss book talk plans*

- M Begin self-selected novel; Draft Book Talk DUE

- W Continue Self-Selected Novel; Begin Book Talks (Picture Books)
- [F] Finish Self-Selected Novel; Print reviews + research author
- No class meeting: I'll be at the African American Print Culture Conference (Madison, WI)

Week 5

- M Annotated Reviews + Response to Research DUE; Read Introduction + latest report on CBC site along with statistics on "Books by and about People of Color"; Finish Picture Book Talks
- W Read *Remember: The Journey to School Integration*; Grad. Students read *Remember* OR *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*
- End *First Set of D2L Posts* (Posts + Foreword DUE in class or mailbox by next Wednesday)
- F Annotate "I Actually Thought We Would Revolutionize the Industry"; Draft Foreword DUE

UNIT 2 **The 1920s – 1950s: Crisis & Opportunity**

Week 6

- M Begin *The Secret of the Old Clock*; Annotate "Books and the Negro Child"
- W Finish *The Secret of the Old Clock*; Bring *The Best of the Brownies' Book*
- 1st Set of D2L Posts + Foreword DUE
- F Read "Introduction" + "Preface" to *The Best of The Brownie's Book* (pp. 10-22) + entire facsimile of the April 1921 issue (pp. 299+), with special attention to assigned genre or features

Week 7

- M Read "The Story Telling Contest" (pp. 170+ in *The Best of the Brownies' Book*) + first part of ch. 2: "For the Children of the Sun" in *Free Within Ourselves* (pp. 23-35 only);
- Graduate Students also read journal article on *The Brownies' Book*
- W Begin Self-Selected pre-1965 AAYL
- F Finish Self-Selected Book + relevant chapters in *Free Within Ourselves*

Mid-term Participation Score

UNIT 3 **The 1960s & Beyond: Civil Rights & Cultural Consciousness**

Week 8

- M Read “The All-White World of Children’s Books” (handout) + *The Snowy Day*
- W Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center to select Civil Rights Era AAYL; Read ch. 4 “Give Them Back Their Own Souls’: Change and the Need for Change” in *Free Within Ourselves*; Grad Students also read James Baldwin’s “A Talk to Teachers”

[F] Fall Break ~ *no classes*

Week 9

- M Read “What Ever Happened to the All-White World of Children’s Books?” (handout);
Begin *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou*
- W Continue *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou*; Read “The People Could Fly” (handout)
- F Finish *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou*; Annotate “The Black Experience in Children’s Books” (handout)

Week 10

- M Begin Self-Selected book
- W Continue Self-Selected Book
- F Finish Self-Selected Book; Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center for Research
Second Set of D2L Posts DUE by next Wednesday

Week 11 *individual conference appointment this week & next to discuss Review Essay Draft*

+ appointments with Grad Students to discuss Research Paper Topic

- M Draft Book Talk DUE
- W Begin Book Talks

- 2nd Set of D2L Posts DUE
- F Finish Book Talks

UNIT 4 African American Youth Literature at the Turn of the Century

Week 12 NOTE: Review Essays are DUE one week after scheduled appointment.

- M Read *Amazing Grace* + *Tar Beach* + Self-Selected Picture Book
- W Read “Insiders, Outsiders, and the Question of Authenticity” (handout) +
Relevant sections of
ch. 6: “African American Picture Books Take Shape” + ch. 7: “African American
Picture Books Expand” in *Free Within Ourselves*
- F Read *Nappy Hair* + responses to it in Horn Book magazine

Week 13

- M Begin *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*
- W Finish *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*
- F Read “Slippery Slopes and Proliferating Prizes” (handout) and Responses

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 ~ appointments with Grad Students for Research Paper Draft

- M Begin *Monster*; Re-read “Where are the Children of Color in Children’s Books?”
or another relevant essay by an African American writer or illustrator
- W Continue *Monster*
- F Finish *Monster*; Potential Final Exam Topic DUE (include bibliography of
secondary works)
- Last Set of D2L Posts DUE Monday

Week 15 ~ individual conference appointments available to discuss Final Exam
Topics/Outlines

- M Read (or re-read) Self-Selected Primary or Secondary Work(s) for Final Exam
Essay or Research Paper
- W Read Self-Selected Work(s) for Final Exam Essay or Research Paper

F Read Self-Selected Work(s) for Final Exam Essay or Research Paper

Final Exam: Wednesday 12/17 10:15 -12:15

Final Draft Research Paper DUE

